

earthy phrases to describe the vision: "to be one's own man," "to be beholden to no man," "to be free, white, and twenty-one." The articulation of this vision ranged from Thomas Jefferson's prized yeoman farmer to Horatio Alger's youth who made good in the big city. The dream was realized (and still is) by many Americans, though not all went from bobbin boy to industrial magnate as did Andrew Carnegie or from obscurity to great influence as did Dwight L. Moody. But affluence and influence were the further reaches of the dream, for it could be both modestly envisioned and fulfilled. For most, it involved such things as a home of one's own, a shop or store with a dependable clientele, a farm free of debt, and so on through the variation of goals which free men may set for themselves.

These were not visions of utopia, nor of euphoria. They involved hard work, careful husbandry, continued striving, and perchance the faith that if one had shown himself a worthy steward of his possessions, there would await him at the end of life the inimitable praise, "Well done . . .," promised in religious teachings. The utopian dream is the opposite of the American dreams. It is a vision of earthly bliss, not of struggle and accomplishment. It is

a collective vision, not an individualistic one. The vision is one for society, and everyone in society must be drawn into it, whether he will or no. It is monolithic; diversity must yield to uniformity and conformity for it to be realized (if it could be). Utopians have, of course, pictured release and "freedom" for individuals in their utopias, but such evidence as we have from attempts to create utopias indicates that no importance need be attached to these claims.

"The Dream" Emerges

In the course of time, though, American dreams have begun to be subsumed into An American Dream. Even in our day, individuals still dream and work for the fulfillment of their dreams — with considerable success as measured by the homes, farms, vacation cottages, and businesses that they own. But the Dream is swallowing up the dreams, as property is circumscribed by restrictions, as taxes increase at all levels, as government guarantees of security replace individual provisions for security, as inflation destroys the utility of money as a means of saving, and as people are bombarded on every hand by products of thought carried on at the level of social units rather than individuals. In short, a transformation has taken place in the type of

dreams that are approved by society, and a long term effort has gone on to draw men into the mental context of a single dream or vision.

In political terms, the Dream has had a variety of names: the Square Deal, the New Freedom, the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the New Frontier, and, most recently, the Great Society. In the latter two phrases the character of the Dream is made manifest with greater clarity: it is a collective vision to be arrived at collectively by the use of government to reconstruct men and society.

The terms may be new, but the Dream is an old one. It is a utopian vision for America. The struggle to implant the vision in the minds of Americans has been a long one (and will require considerable verbiage in the telling of it), for the vision was set forth in a manner that began to appeal to some Americans in the last years of the nineteenth century. Utopian novels poured forth in great number and variety from about 1885 to 1911. As one book points out, "the 1890's in the United States [w]as the most productive single period in the history of utopian thought."⁴ Some of the more important utopias, mainly by

American writers, were: Ignatius Donnelly, *Caesar's Column* (1890); William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1890); Thomas Chauncey, *The Crystal Button* (1891); Ignatius Donnelly, *The Golden Bottle* (1892); William D. Howells, *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894); H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (1895); and Edward Bellamy, *Equality* (1897).⁵

"Looking Backward"

One book, however, may have been more important than all the others combined in awakening the vision in America. It certainly gave great impetus to the production of utopias by its success. This was Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, published in 1888. By 1890 the book had sold 200,000 copies, and was in that year selling at the rate of 10,000 every week.⁶ It is, even today, available in an inexpensive paperback edition. Within two years after the publication of the book, 162 clubs located in 27 states were holding meetings. They were called Nationalist clubs. Bellamy did not use the word socialist to describe his obviously socialist system, and his early followers took a more neutral word also. A magazine,

⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁴ Glenn Negley and J. Max Patrick, *The Quest for Utopia* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1952), p. 138.

⁶ Daniel Aaron, *Men of Good Hope* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 104.